

A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE

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Having watched and observed life from the standpoint of soldier for ten years of my life, I felt there was no higher honor than to serve my country and defend the values that established this country. My family has a history of serving this country dating back to the American Revolution and I felt that to continue on in that tradition was the honorable thing to do.

As I went through the process which led to my decision to refuse deployment to Iraq for the second time, I was torn between thoughts of abandoning the soldiers that I serve with, or following my conscience which tells me: war is the ultimate in destruction and waste of humanity.

Thoughts that we could, and should, consider better ways to solve our differences with other people in the world have crossed my mind on numerous occasions. And this was the driving force that made me refuse deployment to Iraq a second time. Some people may say I am doing so out of fear of combat; I am not going to tell you that the thought of going back to that place isn't scary, but that is not the reason for my decision to not return.

I want people to know that the longer I thought about just how stupid the concept of war really is the stronger I felt about not participating in war. Why do we tell our children to not solve their differences with violence, then turn around and commit the ultimate in violence against people in another country who have nothing to do with the political attitudes of their leaders?

Having read numerous books on the subject of war and having heard all the arguments for war, I have come to the conclusion that there are no valid arguments for the destructive force of war. People are destroyed, nations are destroyed, and yet we continue on with war. The young people that I went with to the combat zone looked at it like it was a video game they played back in their childhood.

When you contemplate the beauty of the world around us and the gifts we have been given you have to ask yourself, "Is this what humanity is meant to do, wage war against one another"? Why can't we teach our children not to hate or to not be afraid of someone else just because they are different from us? Why must it be considered honorable to train young men and women to look through the sights of

a high-powered rifle and to kill another human being from 300 meters away?

Consider, if you will, the positive things that could be accomplished without war in our lives; prescription medication that is affordable for seniors; college grants that are available for high schools seniors; I could name a list of reasons not to waste our resources on war. The most important being to let the children of the world learn war no more.

I've received e-mails from people who said that I was a coward for not going to war, but I say to them that I have already been, so I do not have anything to prove to anyone any more. What is there to prove anyway, that I can kill someone I do not even know and has never done anything to me? What is in that concept that anyone could consider honorable?

I first realized that war was the wrong way to handle things in this or any other country when I went to the war zone and saw the damage that it causes. Why must we resort to violence when things do not go our way? Where is the logic of that? I have felt that there are better ways to handle our business than to bomb each other into oblivion. When you are on the water in a boat and you have a chance to see dolphins playing with each other as they go about their business, you realize that if they can live without war then humanity should be able to as well.

Can't we teach our children to leave war behind in history where it belongs? We have come to realize that slavery was an obsolete institution and we realized that human sacrifice was an obsolete institution and we left them behind us. When are going to have the same enlightened attitude about war?

I look at my stepchildren and realize that war has no place with me in giving them what they need to survive the trials and tribulations of early adult hood. And if you look at all the time soldiers lose in the course of fighting wars such as birthdays and anniversaries, their children going to the senior prom and college graduations, and other things which can never be replaced, then you have to come the understanding that war steals more from people than just the sense of humanity, it also steals some of that humanity from their family.

I have learned from first hand experience that war is the destroyer of everything that is good in the world, it turns our young into soulless killers and we tell them that they are heroes when they master the "art" of killing. That is a very deranged mindset in my opinion. It destroys the environment, life, and the resources which could be used to create more life advancing endeavors.

War should be left behind us; we should evolve to a higher mindset even if it means going against what most people tell us in this country, such as that we can never stop fighting with other people in the world. I have made the decision to not participate in war any longer and some people in this country cannot comprehend that concept but to me it is simple. I have chosen not to take part in war and it was easy to come to that decision.

I cannot tell anyone else how to live his or her life but I have determined how I want to live mine--by not participating in war any longer, as I feel that it is stupid and also that it is against everything that is good about the world.

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